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## Accountability in Policing COVID-19

### Lessons from the Field

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#### Introduction

With COVID-19 vaccination campaigns rolling out in multiple countries, the world is preparing to open up following the global health crisis caused by the novel coronavirus, which has infected over 185 million people and claimed more than 4 million lives worldwide. It disrupted world economies, decimated nations’ livelihoods, and placed many societies at a high risk for increasing poverty and inequalities. Experts have predicted that many communities, especially those with fledgling economies and weak social structures, will take a long time to recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared that COVID-19 had reached the global pandemic level on March 11, 2020, after the virus was first discovered in Wuhan province in China in December 2019. The WHO urged states to take immediate action due to “the alarming levels of spread and severity.”<sup>1</sup> The lightning speed with which the pandemic spread in communities and across borders and the scale of its severity made it a public health emergency, thus justifying states’ actions to impose lockdowns, to isolate communities under quarantine, and to place restrictions on certain rights, including the freedom of movement.<sup>2</sup>

The unprecedented global outbreak of COVID-19 underscores states’ obligation to protect the inherent right to life and the subsequent right to health. Safeguarding lives under these circumstances requires states to break the infection transmission chain and stem the virus’s spread. Both national and international human rights laws allow states

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1 “WHO Director-General’s Opening Remarks at the Media Briefing on COVID-19—March 11, 2020,” World Health Organization, [www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020](http://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020).

2 Several countries around the world, including Kenya, Uganda, Lebanon, and Colombia, have issued executive orders imposing restrictions. In Kenya, “the Public Health (COVID-19 Restriction of Movement of Persons and Related Measures) Rules, 2020” were issued. In Uganda, the “Public Health (Control of COVID-19) Rules, 2020 (Statutory Instrument 52 of 2020)” were issued (<https://ulii.org/akn/ug/act/si/2020/52/eng@2020-05-20>). In Lebanon, the council of ministers issued the first restrictions related to COVID-19 on March 15, 2020, which stipulated a curfew, the closure of businesses and governmental institutions, and a halt on public assemblies and gatherings ([www.pcm.gov.lb/Library/Files/Decision%20n1%2015-3-2020.pdf](http://www.pcm.gov.lb/Library/Files/Decision%20n1%2015-3-2020.pdf)). In Colombia, Decree 417 of March 17, 2020, declared a state of economic, social, and environmental emergency, allowing the government to issue laws by decree exclusively to address the COVID-19 crisis ([https://coronaviruscolombia.gov.co/Covid19/docs/decretos/presidencia/51\\_Presidencia\\_Decreto\\_417.pdf](https://coronaviruscolombia.gov.co/Covid19/docs/decretos/presidencia/51_Presidencia_Decreto_417.pdf)). Subsequent decrees have extended this state of emergency. President Duque announced another 90-day extension on May 26, 2021.

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to temporarily suspend certain rights and invoke special powers that would be considered an infringement of civil liberties in normal situations. These actions are justified by the need to protect the collective good.

It soon became evident that the COVID-19 pandemic is far more than a global health crisis—it has also become a human rights crisis. Since the coronavirus breakout, countries have rushed to close borders, imposing states of emergency, curfews, traveling restrictions, and lockdowns of communities. To enforce these emergency measures, states have deployed security forces, some of which have been involved in widespread violations of human rights, including torture, killings, and intimidation of people who are perceived as failing to comply with their instructions. Even in countries where a state of emergency was not invoked, communities were put under lockdown, people's movement and public gatherings were restricted, and businesses temporarily closed.

Although national and international law, as noted, during emergencies permit the derogation of certain individual rights, such as freedom of movement, those restrictions should strictly adhere to the principles of proportionality and nondiscrimination. Some of the countries where the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) works, including Uganda, Lebanon, Kenya, and Colombia, are among those whose security agencies have weaponized their powers under the emergency measures and have often used brutal means to keep people off the streets. The countries' responses to the public health crisis resulted in violence and neglect. While the bulk of those abuses were committed by constitutional police forces, we have noticed a growing trend of using paramilitary and other noninstitutional forces or citizen vigilantes to police the enforcement of emergency measures.

This paper will briefly analyze the emerging trends of vigilante policing and draconian regular policing postures during the pandemic in four countries: Uganda, Lebanon, Kenya, and Colombia. These countries were selected based on ICTJ's long-term engagement in them. Even though the country contexts are diverse, their governments took similar actions, with almost the same results: pervasive and widespread human rights violations. Because of a prevailing culture of impunity in those countries, there were no safeguards to control the use of extraordinary measures and prevent the commission of gross violations of human rights. The pandemic and its social and economic consequences led to crisis and turmoil across the globe to different degrees; nevertheless, all states remain under the obligation to respect individual human rights and protect individuals from violations of those rights.

The paper will also discuss how armed groups have emerged or exercised control in communities where there is no government presence, imposing states of emergency and lockdown measures, with little regard to the principles of proportionality and nondiscrimination. In all four countries examined, regular police and paramilitary forces have increased their powers, which they have abused extensively, as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these security forces' operation style is deadlier than the virus—exposing the profound frailties in some of these democracies.

## Uganda

In Uganda, the Local Defence Units (LDUs) have come to play a major role in the enforcement of COVID-19 regulations. LDUs were established in 2018 in response to the surge of homicides in the Kampala metropolitan area.<sup>3</sup> Kampala had experienced a spate of killings, including of high-profile government officials, such as the state prosecutor, and law enforcement officials. Most of these killings remain unresolved. The LDU security model started in the 1990s. Each village recruited men to help with security in their locality; their “mandate” was limited to that specific area.<sup>4</sup> However, the more recent establishment of LDUs was sanctioned by the president, and the units were placed under the army’s direct command.<sup>5</sup> The lack of jobs elsewhere and the promises of incentives attracted many young people to join an LDU. Nevertheless, some rights groups have expressed fear that children are also being recruited into LDUs.<sup>6</sup> There is no explicit law for the creation of LDUs, but in January 2020, the army commenced a process of reintegrating the 20,000 LDU members into their ranks.<sup>7</sup>

Uganda is one of the countries in Africa that is at risk of being seriously harmed by the pandemic. Even before the country became a hotbed for COVID-19, Ugandan authorities started applying oppressive measures by unleashing the LDUs and state security agents to enforce lockdown and other emergency measures. In March 2020, the government imposed a series of restrictions including the ban of public transportation, the closure of schools, the suspension of all nonfood market stalls, and a dusk-to-dawn curfew.<sup>8</sup> At this time, the country had only one confirmed case and no deaths.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the government enacted extreme measures to prevent the spread of the virus. By July 2020, more Ugandans were being killed by the excessive force used by the Ugandan authorities than by COVID-19. It was reported that while only four victims had fallen to COVID-19, the LDUs had killed 12 people across the country.<sup>10</sup>

The bulk of public complaints to the government against the LDUs were ignored. Instead, the authorities defended the LDUs, asserting that most of them were well trained and pointing out that those individuals who had committed “mistakes” had faced disciplinary action.<sup>11</sup> Evidence of the LDUs’ display of gross disrespect for human rights abounds.<sup>12</sup> Only a few LDU members have been brought before the court and convicted to life imprisonment for the murder of a civilian.<sup>13</sup> Rather, the majority of those who committed human rights abuses have escaped scot-free. This failure to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions obviously fuels the sense of impunity and makes them feel untouchable.

The public’s outcry pushed the government to temporarily withdraw the LDUs—reportedly for a refresher training, even though the authorities refused to admit that violence and abuse had occurred. The Ugandan army has, on several occasions, apologized to the public for the actions of the LDUs, explaining that as the lockdown was eased, they

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3 “Uganda to Set up New Force to Make Kampala Safe,” *BBC*, Nov. 6, 2018.

4 See “UPDF Explains Why LDUs Are Deployed Outside Their Areas of Origin,” *The Independent*, July 9, 2020.

5 “Kampala LDUs to Receive Orders from Army,” *The Independent*, March 25, 2019.

6 Human Rights Watch, *Stolen Children: Abduction and Recruitment in Northern Uganda* 15, no. 7(A) (March 2003): 19–20, Pt. 5, “Child Recruitment by Ugandan Forces.”

7 “Army Leadership to Integrate Graduate LDUs into UPDF,” *The Independent*, Jan. 11, 2020.

8 See “Museveni Suspends Public Transport for 14 days,” *Daily Monitor*, March 25, 2020.

9 See “Uganda Confirms First Coronavirus Case,” *Daily Monitor*, March 22, 2020.

10 See “COVID-19: How Ugandans Died at the Hands of Security Agents,” *Daily Monitor*, Aug. 8, 2020.

11 *Ibid.*

12 Monitor Team, “Uganda: LDUs on the Spot over Rights Abuses,” *AllAfrica*, May 11, 2020.

13 “LDU Personnel to Spend Rest of His Life in Prison for Murder,” *Daily Monitor*, July 7, 2020.

would be withdrawn—but not basing such a decision on their human rights record, which continues to remain unaddressed.<sup>14</sup>

Since they were recruited, the rank and file of the LDUs have served as armed militia at the disposal of the ruling National Resistance Movement party, which uses them for both law enforcement and in suppressing the opposition. The use of paramilitary groups in Uganda has less to do with preserving law and order than protecting the interests of the regime. A researcher extensively documented how state crime preventers were instrumental in the efforts “to rig the elections, intimidate voters, and [ensure a] vote en masse for the ruling National Resistance Movement regime.”<sup>15</sup> The LDUs went into overdrive to attack opposition political parties in the run-up to the January 14, 2021, general election. With the rebirth of the LDUs and their reintegration into the regular armed forces, one can surmise that they were used for the same purpose as before.

### Lebanon

At the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Lebanese government declared a state of national emergency, formally imposing a lockdown for the entire country. The authorities have limited all social gatherings, including wedding ceremonies and funerals. All the state’s security forces, including the army, have been used to curtail the spread of the virus.

The pandemic brought Lebanon’s already ramshackle economic infrastructure to the brink of total collapse. The months of accumulated economic hardship, trouble in the banking sector, the freefall of the Lebanese currency, and incessant failures by the government to deliver on social services triggered mass protests, which had started even before the outbreak of COVID-19. Lebanese citizens from various social statuses, including workers and students, risked being infected by the virus to demand change and accountability.

Inevitably, the threat of the virus reduced the number of people who came out to protest. Protesters’ tents, which were placed in public squares, gradually disappeared across the country, and as the infection rate escalated, the streets became deserted. As the world contends with and assesses the nature of the pandemic and its long-term consequences, the Lebanese government viewed it as an opportunity to tighten its grip on power and crack down on protesters.

State security apparatuses forcibly removed protesters in the streets of Beirut and the northern city of Tripoli, arresting those who resisted. Blockades were cleared and replaced with security checkpoints. In the guise of fighting the spread of COVID-19, curfews and other restrictions repressed freedoms without responding to any of the protesters’ legitimate requests.

The government’s priorities became even more evident as it initially refused to take other necessary measures to impede the pandemic’s spread, such as suspending flights and subjecting travelers to mandatory quarantines. As it displays a peripheral effort to fight COVID-19, the Lebanese state has invested most of its resources into regaining a strong grip over civil society.

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<sup>14</sup> “UPDF Recalls LDUs for Fresh Training,” *Daily Monitor*, July 16, 2020.

<sup>15</sup> See Rebecca Tapscott, “Where the Wild Things Are Not: Crime Preventers and the 2016 Ugandan Elections,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 10, no. 4 (2016): 693–712.

In the midst of the pandemic, Beirut was rocked by a massive explosion that destroyed much of the country's port, posing serious threats to tens of thousands of Palestinian and Syrian refugees who depend on humanitarian assistance that comes through that port.<sup>16</sup> One month later, the COVID-19 infection rate increased by 220 percent. Over 500 new cases were reported on a daily basis over a period of time.<sup>17</sup>

Inevitably, the pandemic accelerated vulnerabilities, exposed preexisting social and economic inequalities, and put additional strains on social services. Over 1.5 million refugees, migrant workers, and informal laborers are struggling to survive.<sup>18</sup> Tens of municipalities have imposed unprecedented restrictions on Syrian refugees who rely on daily informal and underpaid work to feed their families. The country's armed forces, which were ordered to conduct patrols and erect security barriers, held campaigns to distribute food to people in some regions. These scenes reinforced a culture that is not alien to Lebanon, a culture of "military rule," which gives the military and security forces broad powers.

## Kenya

Unlike in other countries, Kenyan authorities did not have militias and nonconventional security forces to impose containment measures to suppress the spread of COVID-19. Instead, its regular police service enforced the containment measures, and in so doing committed extensive human rights abuses. In addition, the Kenyan security forces drawn from the National Police Service focused mostly on targeting individual citizens rather than galvanizing communities to fight the virus.

Kenya declared its first dusk-to-dawn curfew (7 p.m. to 6 a.m.) on March 25, 2020, when the country had recorded just 50 confirmed cases of COVID-19. Notably, the country had not yet started conducting mass testing, and the number could thus have been higher. However, people perceived the first nine weeks of the overnight curfew as a nightmare because of the brutal methods and excessive force used by the police. It is reported that these excesses resulted in the deaths of at least 15 people during that period.<sup>19</sup> On the first night of the curfew, an 18-year-old boy was beaten to death by two police officers.<sup>20</sup> It was also reported that at least six people died at the hands of the police officers in the first 10 days of the curfew's imposition.<sup>21</sup>

The Kenyan police continued to apply extreme measures in the enforcement of the COVID-19 restrictions, including tear-gassing people on their way home from work. In Kenya's port city of Mombasa, it was reported that on the first day of the initial curfew, the police threw tear-gas canisters at commuters who were in a line to board the ferry, the only means of transport to and from the mainland.<sup>22</sup> The police ordered the com-

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16 Developmental Action without Borders/Naba'a, "Syrian Refugee—Beirut Explosion and COVID 19," Project no. 48459: Lebanon, Global Giving, [www.globalgiving.org/projects/syrian-refugee-beirut-explosion-and-covid-19/](http://www.globalgiving.org/projects/syrian-refugee-beirut-explosion-and-covid-19/).

17 International Rescue Committee, "COVID-19 Cases Increase 220% in Month Since Beirut Explosion," Sept. 1, 2020.

18 Developmental Action without Borders/Naba'a, "Syrian Refugee."

19 Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, "Press Release: Safeguarding Human Dignity and Human Rights in Combating COVID-19," April 29, 2020.

20 See Rael Ombuor, "Kenyan Police Accused of Killings, Excessive Force While Enforcing COVID-19 Curfew," VOA, April 23, 2020.

21 Ibid.

22 Otsieno Namwaya, "Kenya Police Abuses Could Undermine Coronavirus Fight: Authorities Should Investigate Claims of Excessive Force, Abuse," Human Rights Watch, March 31, 2020.

muters to lie on the ground, causing a stampede, contrary to government directives that were meant to ensure social distancing rules, de facto accelerating the chances of the virus spreading.<sup>23</sup> The aggressiveness of the police officers was pervasive, and many believe the number of violations and deaths was much higher but remained unreported in many communities, especially in the rural areas.<sup>24</sup> The security forces were also accused of rampant indiscriminate “shootings, harassment, assaults, robbery, inhumane treatment, and sexual assault.”<sup>25</sup>

The 2010 Constitution of Kenya stipulates that police reform is a priority to create police institutions with the mandate to protect people’s fundamental rights and freedoms. In 2012, the Kenyan National Police Service Commission commenced a vetting exercise, a laudable accountability mechanism that was meant to lustrate corrupt and abusive police officers who were unsuitable to continue serving in the police force. According to the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, the Kenyan police had been associated with human rights violations long before the country gained independence in 1963, continuing to current times, and therefore, such a measure and the move to transform the police force into a police service was highly praised. Previous failures to properly vet the police, including “the lack of competitively recruited staff, [and] a seeming inability to vet senior police officers implicated in graft and other violations,” cost Kenyans dearly.<sup>26</sup> Among other things, “the police were incapable of preventing, containing, and managing the 2007-2008 post-election violence and some police actively engaged in human rights violations.”<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the need for a mechanism to continually hold police officers accountable, including through a credible vetting process coupled with extensive training of the cadre of the service. As indicated here, besides being unlawful, police brutality has undermined the efforts to fight against the virus, eroding even further Kenyans’ trust in the authorities and their public policies, including those responding to the pandemic.

## Colombia

The COVID-19 pandemic and the government’s management of the crisis have exacerbated structural problems in Colombia such as the inequitable distribution of wealth, the lack of access to public services and entitlements, poverty, and exclusion, among others. Even before the pandemic, in 2019, thousands of Colombians, especially young people, took to the streets to protest the declining economy, unemployment, and the dearth of opportunities. These protests, however, were interrupted by the pandemic after the government’s restrictive measures to address it.

In its latest report, Colombia’s National Administrative Department for Statistics found that the number of people living in poverty increased from 17.4 to 21.2 million in 2020 and that 42.5 percent of the population live in precarious conditions.<sup>28</sup> This situation led to a new wave of social unrest, which began on April 28, 2021 and continued for over

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23 Ibid.

24 See Ombuor, “Kenyan Police Accused of Killings.”

25 John-Allan Namu and Tess Riley, “Nine Weeks of Bloodshed: How Brutal Policing of Kenya’s Covid Curfew Left 15 Dead,” *The Guardian*, Oct. 23, 2020.

26 Christopher Gitari Ndungú, International Center for Transitional Justice, “Failure to Reform: A Critique of Police Vetting in Kenya” (November 2017), 1–2.

27 Amnesty International, “Police Reform in Kenya: ‘A Drop in the Ocean’” (2013), 7.

28 See “Information on national monetary poverty 2020” (updated on April 29, 2021). National Administrative Department for Statistics, retrieved on July 21, 2021, from [www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/pobreza-y-condiciones-de-vida/pobreza-monetaria](http://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/pobreza-y-condiciones-de-vida/pobreza-monetaria).



two months.<sup>29</sup> The government's response was severe, characterized by efforts to stigmatize the protests and an excessive use of force to repress them. For the period between April 28, 2021 and June 2021, social organizations reported that security forces were responsible for 44 homicides and 4,687 cases of violence, with 29 homicides pending verification.<sup>30</sup> These organizations also reported that in just 13 days the Urgent Search Mechanism responded to 168 cases of persons who went missing in the context of the national strike,<sup>31</sup> and that at least five of the individuals were found dead.<sup>32</sup> Given this serious deterioration in the country's human rights situation, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights conducted a special visit to Colombia and issued a report detailing the violations committed during the national strike. The commission also announced the launch of a special monitoring mechanism to address the situation.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, when the global pandemic broke out, armed groups in several territories reclaimed control in order to suppress the virus's spread. Armed groups in at least 11 of Colombia's 32 states announced restrictive rules to prevent the spread of COVID-19.<sup>34</sup>

These armed groups have imposed curfews and lockdowns, and have used extrajudicial measures to enforce their self-made rules, including attacking people and threatening the use of lethal force if people fail to submit to the rules. It was reported that in at least five of those territories, the armed groups used violence to force inhabitants to comply with orders.<sup>35</sup> Using social media platforms such as WhatsApp and flyers, the armed groups announced measures including curfews, lockdowns, banning outsiders from accessing communities, restriction of movement, and even limiting boats' travels in coastal areas. Transportation between villages was also shut down.

In the impoverished and violent port city of Tumaco, on the Pacific coast, armed groups banned residents from fishing. Most of the people residing in that city rely on fishing for their livelihood, so such a measure practically equates to reducing them to starvation. Vendors were also prevented from selling on the streets in Tumaco.<sup>36</sup>

It was reported that individuals who were suspected of having contracted the COVID-19 virus were compelled to leave the region under death threat.<sup>37</sup> On April 26, 2020, three civilians were killed, and four others were injured by armed groups in the southwestern

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29 Since November 2019, there have been several waves of social unrest. The protesters' extensive demands find their origins in the structural problems mentioned above, as well as other contextual issues such as the non-compliance with the peace agreements and the systematic killings of social leaders and former FARC combatants.

30 NGO Temblores, "Statement to the Public and the International Community on Acts of Violence Committed by the Security Forces in Colombia in the Context of the Protests of the National Strike," June 28, 2021, available at [www.temblores.org/comunicados](http://www.temblores.org/comunicados).

31 Human Rights Everywhere, Enforced Disappearance Team, "The Return of the Detained and Disappeared in Colombia: The Impossible Mapping of Enforced Disappearance During the National Strike 2021," available at <https://co.boell.org/es/2021/06/25/el-regreso-de-los-detenidos-desaparecidos-en-colombia>.

32 The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights references these incidents in the observations and recommendations section of the report presented by the Working Group on Enforced Disappearance during the commission's working visit in June 2021.

33 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, "Observations and Recommendations Following the Working Visit of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to Colombia on June 8-10, 2021," available at [www.oas.org/es/cidh/informes/pdfs/ObservacionesVisita\\_CIDH\\_Colombia\\_SPA.pdf](http://www.oas.org/es/cidh/informes/pdfs/ObservacionesVisita_CIDH_Colombia_SPA.pdf).

34 The states are Arauca, Bolívar, Caquetá, Cauca, Chocó, Córdoba, Guaviare, Huila, Nariño, Norte de Santander, and Putumayo.

35 Human Rights Watch, "Colombia: Armed Groups' Brutal Covid-19 Measures—Killings, Threats, and Social Control," July 15, 2020.

36 See Joe Parkin Daniels, "Colombian Cartels Killing Those Who Don't Obey Their Covid-19 Lockdowns," *The Guardian*, July 15, 2020.

37 Ibid.

state of Cauca.<sup>38</sup> On June 8, a local leader who dared to complain to government authorities about the cruel measures was murdered by armed gangs in the Putumayo town of San Miguel.<sup>39</sup>

After over five decades of fighting, the Colombian government and the FARC rebels signed a historic peace agreement on August 24, 2016, bringing an end to the conflict.<sup>40</sup> A revised peace deal was signed a few months later and was approved by Congress. FARC was able to capture many territories during the decades of battle. Despite the elusive peace and intermittent tension that accompanied the peace process, the government was supposed to establish its presence in FARC territories. But that process of ensuring a government presence to guarantee protection and the availability of basic social services in the affected communities has been slow.

The armed groups' exercise of abusive social control is attributed to the government's failure to establish a presence in these territories, especially in remote FARC- and cartel-controlled communities across the country.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, the Colombian government has an obligation under both national and international law to protect its citizens, including vulnerable groups living behind FARC lines or in cartel-controlled communities, which continue to suffer at the hands of armed groups.

## Conclusion

Putting human rights at the center of response planning to the global pandemic helps to identify social vulnerabilities and provide support to all people, particularly those who are suffering under the weight of structural inequalities. However, in many countries where institutional and social structures have been weakened by a legacy of discrimination, exclusion, and widespread violence, the restrictive measures to combat the virus have resulted in additional abuses and human rights violations. The measures that were applied by the four countries discussed in this paper, and the violations authorities committed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, are symptomatic of broader structural challenges that undermine the respect for human rights and the rule of law in these societies, and in many others around the world, particularly in fragile states. Unable to depart from a tradition of disrespect for human rights and values, security forces have fought and repressed the people rather than the deadly virus. They fail to understand that “the threat is the virus, not the people.”<sup>42</sup> Inevitably, people who are poor, who must fend for their daily living, were hit most seriously by structural inequalities. While the virus does not discriminate against groups or individuals, it has had a differentiated impact between countries and among different communities depending on the infrastructure that is at their disposal and their culture of respect for human rights.

States must ensure that the measures they put in place to stem the virus's spread, especially during emergency periods, are calibrated to protect people rather than subjecting them to trauma and abuse. Draconian security responses only undermine the health emergency response and can aggravate tensions in communities.

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38 The members of the armed group are part of the Jaime Martínez mobile column, which was born during the 2016 demobilization of the FARC.

39 See Daniels, “Colombian Cartels Killing Those Who Don't Obey.”

40 The Colombian conflict began on May 27, 1964. See James Bargent, “The FARC 1964–2002: From Ragged Rebellion to Military Machine,” *InSight Crime*, May 26, 2014.

41 *Ibid.*

42 United Nations, “COVID-19 and Human Rights: We Are All in This Together” (April 2020), 15.



Constitutional police forces committed a significant number of abuses, but there is a growing trend of using paramilitary and other noninstitutional forces or citizen vigilantes to police the enforcement of emergency measures, especially in Uganda. In other countries, such as Colombia, nonstate armed groups armed forces used their power and control over territories to enforce emergency measures.

In planning a response to a health emergency of the novel coronavirus's magnitude, it is critical to place human rights and human dignity at the center of all efforts. This requires building on the principle of accountability for human rights, ensuring sections of societies are not discriminated against, and enhancing their participation. This method of response planning will build trust between communities and the state, protect human rights, and even engender community ownership of the process, a critical element for overcoming the pandemic.

